03/14/24 BIG FOOD

Experts Break Down 'Healthy' Food Labels — Some Are Just Marketing Ploys + More

The Defender's Big Food NewsWatch brings you the latest headlines related to industrial food companies and their products, including ultra-processed foods, food additives, contaminants, GMOs and lab-grown meat and their toxic effects on human health. The views expressed in the excerpts from other news sources do not necessarily reflect the views of The Defender.

By The Defender Staff

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Experts Break Down 'Healthy' Food Labels — Some Are Just Marketing Ploys

New York Post reported:

> There's healthy, and then there's "healthy." Labels promising "all-natural," "organic," "naturally grown," "non-GMO" and "free-range" ingredients inform shoppers that the food they're about to consume is certifiably healthy. Or is it?
>
> For something to be labeled USD organic it needs to meet a laundry list of requirements and be made of at least 95% of organic ingredients. Organic products aren't grown with pesticides or fertilizers and they don't have any artificial colors or preservatives. They're also not genetically engineered, meaning they are not genetically modified organisms (GMOs). However, not all non-GMOs are organic.

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They don't do lab testing post production so some food may be contaminated with GMOs due to cross-pollination of GMO corn fields, for example.

There's no formal definition for these terms, according to Chris Berry, associate professor of marketing at Colorado State University. These terms are sometimes used as a marketing ploy and are unverified and unregulated compared to foods that are USDA organic or CNG.

California Legislator Proposes Banning These Food Dyes in Public Schools Over Alleged ADHD Link — Here's Why

Forbes reported:

> A California lawmaker introduced a bill Tuesday that would ban a handful of food dyes and a chemical already outlawed in the European Union from foods served in the state's public schools, the latest push to regulate artificial ingredients amid claims they're linked to behavioral issues, hyperactivity and trouble focusing — though the FDA has said they're safe.
>
> Democratic state Rep. Jesse Gabriel has called for schools to alter recipes of cereals, baked goods and other foods that currently contain any of six different colored food dyes, as well as titanium dioxide, and swap the chemicals for natural alternatives like beet juice and turmeric, NBC News first reported.
>
> The dyes — Red 40, Green 3, Blue 1 and Blue 2, Yellow 5, and Yellow 6 — have become a subject of scrutiny from parents, educators and others who claim limited studies show they're linked to behavioral challenges in children, including aggression, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), impulsivity and depression.

Junk Food Addiction Is Real, Experts Say — Here Are the Signs of 'Ultra-Processed Food Use Disorder'

New York Post reported:

> Help may be on the way for junk food addicts. Recent studies suggest that these irresistible dishes are not only designed to be delicious, but also addictive — so much so that some experts are calling the insatiable craving a bona fide mental illness, per the Wall Street Journal.
>
> Symptoms of "ultra-processed food use disorder" or "highly-processed food use disorder," would include intense cravings and difficulty cutting down consumption, as well as withdrawal symptoms such as irritability and agitation trying to reduce intake, according to Ashley Gearhardt, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan and top researcher in the field of food addiction.
>
> Decades of research have shown that ultra-processed foods — such as potato chips, some cereals, store-bought condiments and prepackaged snacks — are bad for the body. And with additional mounting evidence that the brain and gut are intrinsically linked, experts say that food has the power to change our minds, too, contributing to mood disorders, sleep issues, learning impairments and cognitive decline.
>
> One large review of research published last month in the journal BMJ particularly found that diets with high levels of ultra-processed foods saw an increased risk of depression, anxiety and sleep problems. A different study published in the Journal of Affective Disorders in March 2023 found that rates of depression are 80% higher in people whose diets include large

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amounts of ultra-processed foods.

Address Metabolic Crisis at Its Root, Don't Hook Obese Americans on Gov't-Funded Ozempic

ZeroHedge reported:

> Calley Means, a one-time consultant for big food and pharmaceutical companies in the Washington, DC, swamp, and now the founder of TrueMed, a company that enables tax-free spending on food and exercise, has been on a multi-month roadshow exposing how eye-popping bills for Novo Nordisk A/S' Ozempic, its sister drug Wegovy and similar medications, known as GLP-1s, should not be covered by taxpayers, but instead use the funds to address the root cause of the metabolic crisis.
>
> "If our kids are being poisoned by our food, the solution is not to let that happen + inject them with government-funded Ozempic for life," Means wrote in an X post in early February, commenting on his interview with Tucker Carlson.
>
> "We must ask how all these chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, depression, and kidney disease, are connected — and they're connected by metabolic health," he said.
>
> He simply answered: "We can incentivize metabolic habits and fix the food system."

Nestle Faces Investor Challenge Over Healthy Food Targets

Bloomberg reported:

> Nestle SA is facing a formal demand from some shareholders, including Legal & General Investment Management, to significantly improve the amount of healthy food the Swiss consumer group sells.
>
> A coalition of investors, led by ShareAction, has filed a resolution asking the maker of Kit Kat chocolate bars to set an internationally accepted target to increase the proportion of sales of healthier foods, at a time of surging ill health related to poor nutrition worldwide.
>
> Pressure is growing on food companies to make their range of products healthier. Unhealthy diets are a driving factor behind the global growth rates of obesity, increasing the risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some cancers, according to the World Health Organization. The health agency estimates that obesity will cost the global economy $4.3 trillion a year by 2035.
>
> The move by ShareAction comes about six months after the responsible investing charity criticized the world's biggest food maker for relying too "heavily on sales of less healthy foods" and not doing enough to drive sales of more nutritious products.

The Iowa Trout Stream at the Center of a Feedlot Fight

Civil Eats reported:

> His curiosity eventually landed Larry Stone a tour of the project: Walz Energy, a joint venture between a cattle-feeding operation and an energy company. The idea, the manager explained, was that Supreme Beef would run a feedlot, and Feeder Creek would supply a biodigester, a machine that would process manure and capture the resulting methane to be sold as energy.

The biodigester project fell apart, but the plan for an 11,000-head feedlot moved forward. Without the biodigester, Supreme Beef — which is perched on the headwaters of Bloody Run Creek, a spring-fed trout stream filled year-round with rainbow, brook, and brown trout — had to come up with a plan to get rid of its manure, known as a nutrient management plan (NMP), which would need to be approved by Iowa's Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

According to the DNR, any open feedlot operation with 1,000 or more animal units needs to submit a plan to ensure the operation does not over-apply manure to surrounding cropland.

The scrutiny of these plans is timely, as Iowa now has the second-highest cancer incidence in the country, and it is the only state where rates are increasing. Many cancers are linked to nitrates, which are found in drinking water contaminated with manure or nitrogen fertilizer, and advocates are concerned about the link.

After a Massive Bee Kill, a Scientist Challenges Pesticide Policies

U.S. Right to Know reported:

In 2016, Judy Wu-Smart saw every sign that her career was off to a great start. She was starting a new post as leader of the bee lab at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Her doctoral dissertation, on the health of queen bees, had made headlines. Her students were kicking off some intriguing new research.

Then all her bees started dying. Since her investigation started in 2017, about 90 colonies have died, each of which contained 20,000 to 30,000 bees. She said her typical workday involved seeing "piles and piles of dead bees."

Their symptoms, she said, were consistent with exposure to toxins. The likely cause: Not far from the bee yards, a plant was converting excess crop seeds coated with neonicotinoids — a pesticide that's chemically similar to nicotine — into ethanol.

In the years since she encountered the bee die-off in her research hives, she has testified and consulted on legislation to limit pesticides — specifically neonicotinoids, which coat the outside of corn seed. She has taken her case to Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, California and New Jersey. In all these jurisdictions, she has told the story of what happened to her hives, and she has consistently provided testimony in states that are considering banning the treated seeds. Because of the high bar for federal regulation of pesticides, she is focusing on efforts in statehouses.

Our Daily Bread Can Be a Dietary Disaster

The Guardian reported:

In his article on ultra-processed foods, Giles Yeo writes: "Ultimately, bread is made from flour, salt, water and yeast" (Why the double standards on ultra-processed foods? Because some have better PR than others, March 6). That's like saying coal and diamonds are both just carbon or vodka and whisky are both just alcohol.

By doing so, Yeo forgets (or overlooks) the transformative processes that result in very different things. Lactic acid bacterial fermentation, fundamental to the process of making genuine sourdough bread, leads to changes in flavor and, as a growing body of evidence suggests, it might have health and nutritional benefits.

Meanwhile, Chorleywood bread process loaves aren't "just" three or four natural ingredients. This industrial system all but eliminates fermentation (like much of the sourfaux on the market, there is no lactic acid bacterial involvement at all), and uses a cocktail of additives.

Concern is mounting about the possible negative effects of this on the human gut and our microbiomes. That's before any discussion of the potential effect of consuming additives and industrially modified ingredients. We suggest sticking to real bread.

JonnyPops Faces Lawsuit Alleging Misleading Labels

Star Tribune reported:

> JonnyPops is facing a lawsuit filed in California alleging the Minnesota-based company misleads customers about the nutritious nature of its frozen treats.
>
> The suit's complaint charges the ice pop maker with the "use of misleading, unlawful and fraudulent packaging and advertising practices to attract customers to pay a premium for its seemingly wholesome, fruit-filled ice pops, when in reality, almost all of the nutritional content of these ice pops come from added cane sugar." Current packaging says the products are "made with simple ingredients." Advertising has also boasted "real" or "fresh" cream and "real fruit" as ingredients.
>
> Other Minnesota food companies have faced similar cases, with many of them originating in California where state laws are favorable to consumers filing lawsuits about ingredients. From a legal standpoint California has a reputation for being "pro-consumer," said Paul Vaaler, a professor at the University of Minnesota Law School and Carlson School of Management.
>
> Lakeville-based Post Consumer Brands agreed to a $15 million settlement in 2021 after a California class action about the advertising of its sugary cereals as healthy. General Mills prevailed in 2019 in a California lawsuit about the sugar levels in its cereals. The judge who granted General Mills' motion to dismiss the case held that the company had not misled consumers.

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